1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

spear, and magic horn. In this way the new chiefs are shown to their people.

Chiefs who are to be independent now separate, each moving off with his men to the place where the senior age-village of that chiefdom will eventually be built. All fire in the country is extinguished, even the fires in the homesteads of the old men, and in each of the new independent chiefdoms new fire is made, ceremonially, by the senior headman of the chiefdom and his fellow next in rank. One holds a lion-bone while the other twirls a medicated stick in a groove in the bone. The senior headman and his second each gives fire to the village headman immediately junior to him, and then the latter in turn to his immediate junior, until each of the headmen has fire. At this point the future division of each new chiefdom is foreshadowed, for the second senior headman in each new chiefdom is recognized as the leader of one side of the country. As each village headman lights his fire he calls: 'Come men of such and such a village to me!' and they take fire from him.

Since we are not primarily concerned with symbolism in this book we shall not enter at length into the interpretation of these events.[1] It must suffice to remind our readers of the Nyakyusa myth that their chiefs came down from the Livingstone mountains ten generations ago bringing fire with them, and that they found the previous inhabitants of the valley, who became their subjects, without fire, and eating their food raw. The extinguishing of the old fires and lighting of new is interpreted by the Nyakyusa as a symbol of the new chieftainship. A chief with whom we were well acquainted explained it thus: 'The fire is the fire of lordship (*umoto botwa*). The old chieftainship is coming to an end, the new has come. They extinguish the fires in all the homes, those of the young men and those of the old men, then they make new fire which is taken to every home. For formerly Mwangamilo [the old chief] would have had little power [after the 'coming out'], Mwakyusa and Reubeni [his sons] would have ruled.' But why fire? we asked. 'Because of old,' they relate, we chiefs came with fire, the commoners had not yet got it, they ate raw food only. When we came we slept in men's houses and we made fire and cooked food. Men were astonished, and said:

[1] A full analysis of the symbolism of one ritual necessitates a comparison of all the rituals of the society, which will be made in another book.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

"Ha! what's this?" They were burned; so they said: "These are chiefs because they brought this fire." It is this they remember, even to-day. . . .' And another informant explained: 'The fire means (*kukuti*) that a new chief has come, he brings fire, we throw away the old fire in the house.'

Having lighted their fires the young men cut bamboos and build temporary shelters for themselves, making one or more huts according to their numbers. It is forbidden for them to sleep in old huts, nor may they build on the site on which they lived as boys. Usually their first huts are on what was formerly pasture land, and later their fathers move aside to make room for the new generation. On the new site the two senior headmen of the new chief, together with a doctor, plant with magical ritual two branches of a *ficus* (known in Nyakyusa as *ilyabe*)—a species which is important economically since the bark of saplings provides the traditional dress of Nyakyusa women. These trees, known as *ulupundo* and *umpandapanda*, are planted where the future boundary will run between the two halves of the young chief's country, and the senior headman (who is leader of the senior half of the country) builds his house near where the *ulupundo* has been planted. He and his colleague, together with the doctor, proceed, after planting the trees, to set up the hearth-stones of his hut. Again magic is performed. Nyakyusa informants were not agreed as to the symbolism of these trees, as they were about the symbolism of the new fire. The root *ukupanda* means to plant a crop, or to set up, or establish the hearth-stones of a house; it is used also for establishing, or treating, with medicines. Some informants interpreted the *ulupundo* as the chief and *umpandapanda* as his wife, saying: 'We are planting the chief and his wife.' Others said that the two trees represented the two senior headmen of the country, another that they represented the chief's two senior wives. What is certain is that *ulupundo* is regarded as more important than *umpandapanda* and that both are taboo. No one may cut the trees. If anyone breaks the taboo it is believed that lions and leopards (closely associated with chiefs) will roar at night, and treatment by a doctor will be necessary to still them. It is also widely believed that the strength of the chief is associated with the growth of the trees. 'If these trees go dry the reign will not be successful, the chief will be defeated in war. If they flourish and grow the reign will be successful, the chief is

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

241 an immediately adjoining village, until his chief had begun.
476 Members of other villages do not regard the chief, but wait only
622 for their village headman to begin. Within the family, junior wives must follow senior wives, but there is no precedence between brothers. If two should live in the same village it does not matter which begins sowing first, provided both follow the leader, nor need a junior age-village wait on a senior one to begin. Not only must the headman of the village begin the clearing, but each process in cultivation must be initiated by him or his senior wife; thus clearing, raking, burning, planting, and reaping, are ceremonially begun, and the wife of the headman should be the first to wash her millet, and he the first to eat of the new crop. Further, once a process is initiated, the villagers should press on with their tasks so that all may finish about the same time.

241 622 Now the cultivation of millet, cow-peas, and pumpkins[1] is peculiar in that the weeds and grass are not turned in for green manure, as they are for all other crops (except rice), but are collected in heaps and burnt, just before the rains break at the end of the dry season. And the fire for this must be lighted ritually by the headman of the village. Using fire-sticks and 'medicine of plenty' (*umkota gwa ifugo*[2]) bought by the Kukwe from the Sangu people, he ignites a special fire in his own field and then, if a great wife of the chief lives in the village, he lights the heaps in her field. All the members of the village take fire from him, or from the field of the chief's wife. To take fire from a house is forbidden, because the owner of the house from which it is taken may be a witch, who will rot the heaps so that the millet does not grow, or will not ripen. Roasting food on a burning heap, or taking a brand to light tobacco is likewise forbidden, lest the person who does so has medicine which will rot the millet.

• [312]

241 It is thought that if one breaks the rule, beginning a process before the headman, the fields of all the other villagers will suffer. 'If men hoe higgledy piggledy the food in their gardens does not grow, and if they reap higgledy piggledy the yield from all the

[1] Some Kukwe hold that these rules about cultivation applied also to maize and to an old root crop, *undugu*, but the most reliable informants were agreed that the rule was only strictly enforced with regard to the three crops planted 'at the break of the rains, in the new year'.

[2] 'A village headman, *ngwe ifugo*, is one who drives off witches and protects the food.'

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

a. THE 'COMING OUT' (*UBUSOKA*)

Mwaikambo (clerk and son of a chief).[1]

621 622 643 "The village headmen begin to talk among themselves, saying: "Our sons have grown up, should we not establish them?" So they go to tell the chief, saying: "Our sons have grown up, let us show them to the country." Two chiefs always "come out". We call them the senior and the junior. It is an old custom which is still followed that two chiefs should "come out".

[789] 'So the village headmen seek a doctor to make them a medicine horn and treat the tails of chieftainship with medicine. The village headmen take council together and choose two senior headmen to "come out" with the chiefs. These senior headmen drink medicine (*mbondanya*) with the chiefs.

'When many people, together with the two young chiefs, have come together the doctor gives powdered medicine (*mbondanya*) to the chiefs and the senior headman chosen for each chief. They give a spear of chieftainship, and a horn, and tail to each of the men chosen as senior headmen—one for each chief. Each senior headman then binds the horn to the blade of the spear, and standing with his own chief and many men and women, raises the spear to the sky. The women trill [535] and each party goes to its place of "coming out" on the pasturage. Each chief, with his followers, goes to his own place. The men dance; sometimes they have drums, sometimes not.

• [373] 'Then when each party has reached it own place they make fire with fire sticks. The chief just simulates the action of fire-making then his senior headman takes the sticks and makes fire by friction. When they have built the shelters for sleeping in they warm themselves at the fire they have made; they do not take fire from the houses of men. If there are many of them then there will be three or four shelters, if few, then only one shelter. The men and their chief who has "come out" sleep in these shelters and enjoy themselves together (*nakwangala*). The first day they kill two head of cattle. Also they plant "the tree of coming out" (*mpili gwa busoka*) which is called *ubgwande*. They plant it with a man who has come out previously, a man of their fathers' generation, he begins to plant, then he explains to them what to do, saying "plant", then the new senior headman plants it.

'While they sleep in these shelters with their cattle, they eat food which they take from their fathers, bananas, and milk, and other food.

[1] For a note on conspicuous informants see p. vi.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

From time to time their father, the chief, gives them a bull to kill. During the "coming out" food is very plentiful. If people pass on the road they honour them and give them food, and make love to them that they may build there. They remain in their shelters, they do not go about much. If the chief is stingy they teach him a lesson by taking bananas; they say: "Know that we are important people, we are those who have 'come out' and we are your parents." Later on they play drums—I think only in recent years. And the village headmen seize a woman, the daughter of a commoner, as a wife for the chief.

"The horn is the luck of the chiefs, that many people may come to build. Binding the horn to the blade of the spear is to show that the chief is one who has "come out" (*unuka*); it is as if he were carried aloft (*i.e.* "chaired")[1]. We show his greatness ("seniority") to people, then we trill.

"The fire made with fire sticks is to symbolize the new chieftainship. We do not take the old fire of the old men.

"The medicine is to make the chief heavy (*unito*), that it may be apparent that he is a chief.

"The *ukipundo* tree is a memorial of the "coming out", that men may come and say: "So and so planted this tree when he came out." Some say it is to show the power (*umaka*) of the chief, because if it does not grow it is said that his chieftainship will perhaps not flourish; then they will say: "Let us move and plant elsewhere." It is said that the spear of chieftainship is to fight battles; it is strength, manhood; it is treated with medicines.

"The tails are those with which battles are fought. When men go to war the senior headman grasps the tail. If the tail does not lead them well they return from the fight. It, also, they treat with medicines."

[1] A bride at a puberty-marriage ritual is carried about shoulder high.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

coughing disease to the owners of the house.... Pagans used to fear to let those who are sleeping together touch the hearth-bricks or blow up the fire in their house for, if they do so, then the owners of the house, both man and woman, fall sick coughing. They say it is the disease of fires (*nyoto*). . . . But when a woman has borne a child and is suckling it, and her husband is not with her, then it is not taboo.

Making fire by friction and, in more general terms, fire, are symbols of sexual intercourse, and 'the fire of the body and the fire of the house fight'. Drinking from a calabash cup is perhaps also a symbol of intercourse—the shape of the cup suggests it—but there is no direct evidence of such an association.

The taboo on mixing the sex activities of different couples is pushed to the point that women avoid for a day the milk of a cow that has been with the bull. 'They say: "We will harm the cow. It will abort." They compare it with themselves as women.'

Two last pregnancy taboos may be noted which turn, not on the feeling that like things are antagonistic, but that like produces like. Things felt to be alike are treated as causally related. We quote Mwambuputa, the village headman:

> Women fear to stand in a doorway when they are pregnant. They say: 'How should the child stand in the doorway? It will refuse to come out.' Because if birth is delayed, it is as if the child refused to come out of the house. That is the symbol. And I, the husband, feared also [to stand in a doorway]. Now we men do not fear; it is finished; but women still fear.
>
> And another thing, when a woman was pregnant we feared to sit close together, I, the husband, and my child. It was taboo. And for my wife and another woman to sit close together was taboo. It was said that she would bear twins, because we had sat together. Now we men do not fear, but women still do.

(*b*) *The confinement*

A first confinement, like first menstruation, is the occasion for elaborate ritual, and though at later confinements (as at later menstrual periods) certain taboos must be observed, they are less numerous and less strictly enforced than those connected with the birth of the first child, *umwana gwa bunangu*.

A first child should be born at the husband's mother's house, 'and if the first child is a girl they will tell her to come again for the second, saying: "Come that we may treat our husband [i.e. grandson]." ' The woman lies, during labour, on a heap of leaves

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

643
644
796

seedling in each, *indola* in one, and *imbandapanda* in the other. Pits to receive the pots were digged by the doctor, and held in position by the two most important of the subordinate chiefs, who, with closed eyes, filled in the soil all around. The two *imbigita* become later the two lions of the young chief. Every chief has these mysterious lions, which are quite harmless except to evil-doers; if any common person creates or controls a lion, it is the duty of these two to slay it. No one may eat food at harvest time until a portion has been set aside for these lions. The two trees in time provide the shade under which the chief's court will sit, and as long as they stand his residence must not be removed from their neighbourhood.

The doctor now took a broom, and swept the dust into the faces of Reuben and his subordinates, praying that the men under them would be in number as the dust of the earth. All the old fires were extinguished, [372] and new fire was made by the young chief and his fellows; at present from two pieces of wood rubbed together, but in the past, the lower was the bone of a leopard or lion specially dried for the purpose. In the old warlike days this fire kindled the courage of the chiefs, but with the peace that has been brought in by the white men such courage is not called for. From the fire thus made, brands were given out to all householders in the district, and no ashes from old fires were allowed to remain in any house.

Next came the great medicine drinking, which was to give authority to the new chiefs. It is indeed a

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

539 Mwakaleli and came here and died. The Kinga went to BuSangu to buy food, for there was great hunger after Mbasi and Kyala were driven out, and wandering home they came here and met Mbasi. He said, 'Go home, there will be plenty of food, but I want my things.' He had left them at his father's place when he fled with his sister Kyungu. He asked for his leopard and otterskins, his drums, his bows for shooting birds,[1] his harp, mats, a stool, bamboo beer, and twenty hoes. . . . Then the Kinga went back and found their country full of food; and they brought all his things to Mbasi and even things like salt that he had not asked for. . . . This is how the ritual began. . . . Mbasi ruled because he had helped them in their hunger.

173 773 Kasitile (86), the rain-maker, speaking of the same incident, stressed only the hoes. Lwembe 'came to Lubaga and found a good place to settle, then he sent out messengers to Mwemusi (the Kinga chief) and said: "I want my hoes, especially my great, eyed hoe" (*ilikumbulu ilya maso*).' (The old ritual hoes had perforations—'eyes'—on the blades comparable to the perforations on other rain-making instruments.) Still today Kinga priests come to Lubaga to sacrifice to Lwembe (3), and they bring with them hoes.[2]

[778] [782]

The hero of Ngonde, the Kyungu (16), was also associated with iron implements which he had brought with him—a spear, staff, stool, and a sieve used for making rain, which were royal insignia, and razors, spears, and knives of an unusual pattern, which long remained in the groves of the hero and his successors.

[643]

In the commonly-told Nyakyusa myth it was Lwembe who introduced fire to BuNyakyusa—'he found the original occupants eating their food raw'—and the fact that he conferred so great a benefit is the charter for the position of the chiefs, celebrated at every 'coming out'. The Kinga priests push the spread of fire back a little further.

[372]

539 372 Of old in this country [BuKinga] there was no fire, men ate food uncooked; there were very few men in the country, most of it was forest. This was after Mwemusi came to Kinga country. Then one man, a hunter, went into the forest to hunt buck and otter, and he had dogs. And in the forest he made fire with a drill and cooked his food; and gave his friends cooked food to eat, and they were astonished.

[1] The bow and arrow are not now used among the Nyakyusa, but men in their thirties had used them when boys, for shooting birds.

[2] cf. Ludwig Weichert, *Mayibya i Afrika! Kiko wünder Afrika* (Berlin, 1927), p. 129, for a photograph of one.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Then the chiefs took it from him and spread it through the Kinga country . . . and to the Mahasi, the Ndali, the Nyakyusa. . . . It was taken to BuNyakyusa before Lwembe went, when he was a child, before the killing of Nkekete and Kyala.

In the version told by Mwandisi (107), the old blind chief of MuNgonde, the various events of the cycle are rather differently combined; there were three brothers in BuKinga, Lyambilo (12) or Ngutike, Kyala, and Mbasi, and a sister, Kyumba. Lyambilo discovered how to make fire with a fire drill. Kyala was clever at making food—maize and millet—and Mbasi was clever at making animals—cattle, lions, elephants.

Then Lyambilo, the eldest, was angry that his younger brothers should be so clever; he was jealous. First he made war on Kyala, he wounded him once, but he did not die; then he wounded him again, but still he didn't die; then the third time Lyambilo put a stone in the fire and made it hot and threw it at Kyala, and he died, and was thrown into the Lake. But as soon as he died there was a great famine, no rain fell and no food grew. So they had to pray to Kyala to give them rain, and they killed a cow to sacrifice to Kyala. And as soon as they had done this much food grew.

Still Lyambilo was jealous of Mbasi because he could make animals. But when he went to kill him he found so many animals with him, roaring lions, and elephants, that he was afraid and he ran away. And he brought some hoes to Mbasi to say he was sorry for having tried to kill him. Then Mbasi moved from BuKinga to the Nyakyusa hills (Mwamba). . . . Lyambilo stayed in BuKinga. . . . Mbasi came down to the plain on a visit and went back to the hills, but his sister Kyumba stayed down here and married a man and bore a son. Before she came there was no fire here, she brought fire, and so they called her son Kyungu in honour of his mother because she brought fire.

When Mbasi was at Masukulu (in the hills) he made one cow, but it soon died; then he moved to Mbambo and made another cow and this soon died; then he went to Lubaga (which is still called Mbasi) and there he made one cow again which bore many many calves, and he divided his cattle among his sons. . . . Mbasi was Lwembe.

In Ngonde tradition the first Kyungu (16) was a man, descendant of Ngulube the Kinga chief, and he travelled with three brothers and a sister westwards, passing south of Rungwe volcano, where he and his immediate successor were buried, one of them on Kieyo mountain. Their descendants went on to the 'country of the Bisa', then returned eastward to Mbande, the sacred hill which the Kyungu took from a Fipa hunter, Simbobwe. Like Lwembe,

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

The balance between chiefs and commoners is explicit. So also is their dependence on *both* cultivation and herding, and it should be noted that, though the Nyakyusa speak of themselves as stock men, they are not pastoralists to the same extent as the Masai or the Nuer. The number of cattle in Rungwe District today is less than half the human population, and men traditionally have done the heaviest share of cultivation.

In every version of the myth the tension between father and son, or older and younger brother, is stressed. In Nyakyusa society the father (or his eldest son who replaces him) controls the family property and exacts obedience from his juniors who continue to show their respect after his death by sacrifices. The tale of Kyala and Lwembe celebrates the triumph of the junior. Thus, at the heart of the very ritual which sanctifies seniority there is the assertion of the victory of the son and younger brother. The myth expresses the aspirations of subordinates—of commoners and junior kinsmen—as well as the power of chiefs and seniors.

As we have already noted, the heroic cycle makes no reference to the peculiar Nyakyusa institution of age-villages. Their charter is a quite separate myth[1] which tells of a chief who looked on his daughter-in-law and loved her and took her, and this so shocked men that in future fathers and sons built separately, so that a father-in-law should never see his daughter-in-law.

There are other hints of the eternal theme. Besides the saga of Lwembe there is another quite different tale of the origin of fire, which is less often related. In it a girl who had angered her father by breaking his drinking calabash fled from BuKinga to the Nyakyusa valley, where she found people who ate their food raw. She made fire and cooked for them and 'all women came to her to learn to cook'. The long-necked calabash, used as a drinking vessel and in prayer to the shades, is a man's most personal possession destroyed at his death, and it stands for a husband, while cooking is a symbol of the sexual activity of women, so the myth is perhaps a drama of incest, but we have no direct evidence of this.

This last is the only tale in which a woman appears as a benefactor. In general, the mythology is that of a strongly patrilineal society in which men are dominant. The wives of Lwembe who walked behind their lord, shepherded by a lion,

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 85.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

hood.' Some say that it is not the chief himself who grasps the spear but his senior village headman who pauses in the doorway calling the war cry and rejoicing. However that may be, the spear represents the authority of a ruling chief. At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu (177) and his junior brother Mwabungulu (178), both were secluded and rushed out of the hut, but for Mwabungulu there was no spear since the chiefdom of their father was not divided into independent units.

The heirs separate, each going to where his village is to stand, whether it be pasture land or the site of a former village. The young men build temporary shelters for themselves and proceed to the most important rite of all, the making of fire by friction, using a lion bone as the trough of the drill and a reed as the shaft. Each of the two young chiefs starts the process, then his senior village headmen take over, one twirling the shaft and the other holding the trough. It is difficult to make fire with the bone and reed and great importance is attached to success; the senior headman may even be replaced if he fails, for it is taken as a sign that his headmanship will be a failure. If he succeeds, he is known in future as *ulifumu gwa lupegeso*—the headman of the fire-making. All the old fires throughout the chiefdom are put out and each appointed headman, in order of precedence, takes fire from his immediate senior and calls to his men: 'You of such and such a village come to me' and gives fire to them. The men, though crowded together in one or two shelters, split into small groups, each with its own fire, to cook. This is interpreted as a symbol of the ending of the old chieftainship and the establishment of the new. 'That fire means a new chief has come, he brings new fire, we throw away the old fire in the houses. . . .' 'The old chieftainship is coming to an end, the new has come. The fires are put out in all the homesteads, those of the young men and those of the old men, they make new fire which is taken to every home. . . .' 'But why fire?' we asked. 'Because of old . . . we chiefs came with fire, the commoners had not yet got it, they ate raw food only. When we came we slept in men's houses and we lighted fires and cooked food. Men were astonished and said: "Ha! What's this?" They were burned so they said: "These are chiefs because they brought this fire." It is this they remember still.' 'Fire *is* lordship (*ubutwa*)', therefore a junior chief who goes through the ritual with his brothers does not make fire with his headmen; only those who are to rule do so. In other contexts the lighting of fire by friction is a

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

symbol of potency,[1] and we suggest that this also is an element in the ritual of the 'coming out', for the fertility of the chiefdom is thought to be bound up with the virility of the chief.

There are a number of stories about the way in which Mwakyusa (38) surpassed his brothers and one of them tells how each brother made fire and set alight the pasture land (for traditionally parts of the pasture land were fired each season to provide fresh grass for grazing in the early spring), and the fires started by the elder brothers soon died out, but that started by Mwakyusa 'burned for a whole month'. This is interpreted as an omen of his greatness as a chief: fire, potency, lordship are inextricably linked.

At the 'coming out' all things are made new. No matter how crowded the country the young men must move to new sites and the shelters in which they live must be new, though, as will be shown, they do not necessarily move to *unoccupied* country. On their new site the young men live as bachelors, milking their cows and cooking for themselves on their new fires the meat of the cattle they seize, the bananas and grain brought by their wives and mothers. Meat is abundant, for the young chief now rules and has the right to take what cattle he chooses, even from the villages of the old men in his country. 'It was as if there were war, the young men seized cattle, food, and women', and though they did not fight their fathers directly, as the Meru did, they clearly asserted their power. And, as so common further south, the accession of a chief was the occasion for raiding the neighbours: the young men, we were told, went forthwith to test the efficacy of the magic spears and the medicines with which their chief and headmen had been treated. Or the chiefs might lead a battue to clear the country of wild pig, as Mwakatumbula (Mwambete 162) did directly after his 'coming out'. Well fed and exuberant, the young men dance and display their cattle, and entertain visitors lavishly, for every chief seeks to attract men to his country by his hospitality.

Then they set up the sign and memorial of the chieftainship: they plant cuttings of two species[2] of *ficus*, *indola* which is much used as a shade tree, and *umpandapanda* from which bark-cloth is made. Close to these the first house of the chief and that of his senior village headmen are built, and the trees also mark the

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 124, 143.

[2] When writing *Good Company* I mistakenly thought that two cuttings of the same species were planted. Cf. *Good Company*, p. 27.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

the order to clear out the ashes; messages were sent to the great chiefs and the senior territorial nobles of the plain, and they told their juniors. A sacrifice was made in one of the sacred groves of the Kyungus and all fires in the whole Ngonde plain were put out. And then

> all the chiefs from every country near Mbande and the nobles and all the village headmen and all the ordinary men and women, too, went to Kyimbwe where we threw away the sickness of all the country.

At Kyimbwe, which is the crossroads in the bush, they threw away the ashes of their old fires, and some of the pots and baskets in which food is served; while those few people who could not get to Kyimbwe threw them away from their own houses on the same day as the others. At Kyimbwe new fire was made with a fire-drill by the nobles of Ngonde who

> ran with it without looking back and the people danced alongside them and speared one another! . . . They said, 'Let us dance, let us fight that the homesteads may be peaceful'. . . . 'Let us throw out the ashes that death may leave the homesteads and they be at peace.' It is to bring out war from within (*ukusosya*).

The symbolism is the same as in the rituals of kinship when kinsmen gather to admit their quarrels and press one another to speak out, so that they may cleanse themselves of anger.

The new fire was distributed to the whole plain in order. Great chiefs and senior nobles took it first and passed it to their juniors, chiefs passed to village headmen, and in each group the common people got it from their own ruling noble or their own village headman.

In July 1937, while we were visiting Ngonde, there was a plague of rats[1] which threatened the food supply, and Bungulu, the wife of a chief and well known as a prophetess, went into a trance and revealed that the rats were caused by the anger of the previous Kyungu and could be got rid of only by a ritual 'throwing out the rubbish' and sacrifice. Her husband reported the matter to Mulwa, the premier noble of Ngonde, to whom the present Kyungu, Peter—at one time a Church member—had long since handed over all responsibility for communal rituals. Mulwa called four of the leading chiefs who were pagan and a number of

[1] Nothing new in Ngonde. Lord (then Captain) Lugard suffered from them in 1888: F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (1893), vol. i, p. 127. In 1937 the country swarmed with rats: in our own camp we killed 70 to 100 each night.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

and women, it is procreative power, fertility. That power is constantly expelled from the belly but returns again and by that expulsion and return men live.

There was a great deal of criticism from the conservatives because no sacrifice had been made.

MWAMUNDA: Now people are talking much saying, 'We have abandoned that which they did formerly, we are doing something else.' People have many dreams (gesture head on hand as if heavy with anxiety), many say: 'I have dreamed of the dead, they told me to sacrifice a cow, to pray, we did not pray properly, that is useless, it will not effect anything.' So we have told the chief saying: 'Let us kill a cow at the grave of Mwakan'ata,' he has agreed, but the cow has not yet come.

Formerly, on the night following the day of the prayer we should have eaten the sacrificial cow, the chief would have killed two cows and the headmen from different villages would have come and eaten by night, and drunk beer provided by the chief, in the house of the senior wife of the chief. . . . They ate a little meat, raw, the rest they roasted. Then in the morning, when they had eaten and were satisfied, they would go to clear out the house, to throw out the ashes, and to pray, as we prayed now, and to make new fire by friction in the pasture land. The village headman made fire with medicine which the chief gave him, the name of the medicine is Mbamba, it's a tree. To throw out the ashes means to clear out all the filth, the filth which the witches and the shades have brought to us—the filth that is sickness. . . . Do not the witches eat meat at the fire? Human flesh? Some roast at your fires your bodies which they have seized, some go home with the human flesh to their own fires, hence comes the filth of the ashes. The village headmen eat the sacrificial meat at night with the shades, they celebrate for them with the blood which goes beneath. . . .

If the chief has done something wrong, then those above [i.e. the village headmen] pray to those beneath saying, 'Let us help one another to punish him who has strayed, but we do not wish that he should die, let him be ill; perhaps then he will seek something to nourish us.' Again the night before the throwing out of the ashes they confess their anger and say: 'You beneath, this our child (the chief) has remembered us, there is no accusation against him now, may sickness go away from the country, and children sleep, let us all sleep and the cows calve. We greet those beneath.' In my childhood I was repeatedly surprised at night when my father came in, he had a little parcel of meat. 'Where have you been?' I asked. 'We have been praying.' But since I grew up and became a village headman, and was recorded as such [by the administration] we have never seen sacrificial meat.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

796 783 753 Penja chief, Mwalukasa. He called all his people because he heard that smallpox was coming and said: 'Let us pray.' And he called his fellow chiefs, those of the same lineage, and said: 'Let this illness not come, may it go to other chiefs. . . . Listen! I am the chief! We have heard that smallpox is approaching, who is here who rejoices at his approach? Who is here who wishes that it should kill us?'

THE CHIEFS: We, we do not rejoice that it is coming, we reject it, chief Mwalukasa, may it pass by this homestead.

THE COMMONERS: And we also reject it, may it pass by our homesteads.

MWALUKASA: And I, I reject it, may smallpox not come into our country. If there be one who has relatives in a chiefdom where there is smallpox and they come to call him to a funeral let them stay at a distance, and not sleep here, let him not go near until the illness has passed by, at the end of the year. If you witches go to fetch it, you will kill your [754] fellows with whom you are chatting now. You will not enjoy my company or build with me, the chief, if you go and bring in smallpox and kill your fellows. We pray that it may pass. [For it is believed in this country that the witches go to bring in illness, or wild animals, from a distance.]

THE COMMONERS: Yes, indeed, may it pass by.

MWALUKASA: If you go to bury a brother in a country in which there is smallpox stand afar off, tie the cow you bring to a tree and call to them: 'Here is my cow for killing, come and take it.' Take your cow, but do not go into the homestead.

And the people did as he said. Then he told them to get ready for the ritual. He took his calabash cup and three other chiefs with [769] calabash cups followed him. They blew water and prayed to Kyala and the shades. Then the people were gathered together; and the chiefs, led by Mwalukasa, ran round facing each group in turn and blowing out water towards them; the men held their shields in front of them and when the chiefs blew they shook their shields violently, as if fighting.

When all was finished then Mwalukasa said: 'When you go home, [372] throw out the ashes and the fires; all make new fire with drills.' And they all did this.

Finally he had bamboos planted with medicine on the main roads between BuPenja and BuKukwe and BuPenja and BuNyiha. No one [755] ill with smallpox, or who had lived in contact with smallpox, was allowed to pass, unless he had been ill and recovered. I saw the one bamboo clump on the boundary of Nyiha and Penja country. No one passed it, it was very fearsome (*lusiya fijo*).

As in cultivation there was a combination of ritual and science.

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

by horizontal bamboo joists, at right angles to the principal beams of the ceiling. This ceiling never covers the entire room, but only the greater part, and always the part directly above the hearth. Up here firewood is placed to dry. A fine black basket is hung from the ceiling above the fire. Access to the loft is by means of a ladder.

When you read reports by the 'first' Europeans on these peoples and their houses, they always refer to a round house with reclining walls and a conical roof. Merensky (1894) mentions and illustrates such a house (pages 141 et seq.). Fülleborn (1906) mentions and illustrates several houses (Text Volume pages 376 et seq., and Atlas, plates 64–67). The inner surface of the walls of the house was decorated with patterns impressed into the mud layer which covers the bamboo poles. The three stones that form the hearth are shown, and also the bed behind a low permanent partition wall. These were exceptionally fine houses with beautiful, decorated and painted doors. The entrance had relief ornaments, often of coloured clay. Fülleborn notes that the mud houses are the dwellings of married people.

There is no doubt that the round house is the original type of dwelling. In 1955, I saw no round houses like the ones described by the above scholars, but I know that formerly they were often seen, at least as late as 1932. Professor Monica Wilson of Cape Town has told me that she saw them everywhere in 1932, but that during a visit to the district in 1955 she found only one single house of this type, in the village of Masoko.

At the time of my visit, round houses could be seen, but not the type having walls inclining inwards near the ground, and they were not by far as imposing as the houses mentioned above; and there were not many of them. I had the opportunity to make drawings of three houses, all occupied by old people.

The round house is called an *isinga*. In one of these *isinga* there lived an old man whose wife, Malia, lived across the courtyard in a rectangular hut of the old Nyakyusa type (see *infra*). The husband's house was 6.5 metres across, and was divided in halves by a fence made from sticks. One half was where the man lived; it had one bed for him, and one for his grandchildren, who would come to visit him, now and then. Near the wall were [illegible] iron chests; also, a board had been hung at the wall as a roost for the chickens. A hen's nest, a small wicker basket, was placed about 3 ft. above the floor in the furcation of a four or five-pronged stick. These hen's nests are seen in all houses. The ceiling was supported by seven upright posts, seemingly placed entirely at random. The under side of the roof was strengthened by eight circular-running fascines of bamboo. In the centre, a heavy log (not bamboo) reached up to the pointed top of the roof.

The other half of the house was reserved for the cattle, three cows and two calves; there were five posts to which the cattle were tied at night.

The house had an entry door at each end, but there was no passage from the man's half to that of the cattle.

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

4. A visit to the chief's father's grave was paid in company with the chief and some of his *amafumu*. It was situated in a banana grove *(ilisyeto*[11]*)* not very remote from the chief's hut. The grave of the present chief's father was on the ground-floor, about one hundred paces from its edge and was characterised by a small sixedged basalt block about half a metre in height[12] and about forty centimetres in breadth. An *indola*-plant was also standing on the grave about one metre from the basalt block.

On this occasion the chief also told me of the special cases for which sacrifices are offered in this grove. These are performed only in cases of very serious accidents, sickness or famine which may overcome the chieftainship. In such cases a black cow is slaughtered after sunset at the edge of the grove. In the presence of the chief some pieces of meat of the slaughtered beast, together with some bananas, are laid down at the grave. The chief adds a prayer to his ancestors at some distance from the grave, referring to the evil by which the chieftainship or some special village of it has been afflicted. He enumerates all the names of his ancestors and asks them for their help.

The remaining pieces of the meat and other bananas are left in the grove during the night. When the next day dawns, the *amafumu* return and some *abanyago* divide the meat and eat it together. On this occasion the chief orders the removal of all remains of ashes from the huts. The ashes are thrown down in such unclean places as where leprous persons had been buried. After this has been done, the chief in conjunction with an *unnyago*[13] produces a new fire for the huts by twirling, and all other fires of the village, or villages, must be kindled anew from this "need-fire".

5. The reason for visiting an *undagusi* (diviner)[14] who dwelled in Ibungu an older age-set village[15] which seemed to the visitor to be a more ancient part of Katumba, was caused by the sickness of the chief's sister. In accordance with the custom of the Nyakyusa in bringing women back to their father's village if they are very sick, the

[11] Cf. *Johnston*, ilisieta, pl. *amasieta*, p. 450; *Mackenzie*, ilisyeto, burial place, p. 209; *masyeto*, graves of the dead chiefs, p. 121; *Wilson*, Introduction, p. 287, *ilisyeto*, sacred grove; *Merensky*, p. 115.

[12] Cf. *Fülleborn*, p. 327.

[13] Cf. n. 5, p. 3.

[14] Cf. *Johnston*, p. 451.

[15] I proposed to call the special form of villages found within the Nyakyusa society, which are erected on the age-set principle, „age-set villages" (African Studies, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 15—16 June 1943), a terminology that does not alter *G. Wilsons* statements on the "Age Villages" (Introduction, p. 269 ff).